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A Dramatic Allegory

By HOWARD W. DICKINSON

Presented first at Smith Academy, Hatfield, Mass., Feb. 6, 1902.

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The World's Work

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

A Young Man,	*Modern Evening Dress.*
Magician,	*Long white wig, black gown tied at waist with cord, black skull cap.*
Genius of Politics,	*Legal wig and gown.*
Genius of Invention,	*Roman toga.*
Genius of Trade,	*Roman toga.*
Genius of Charity,	*Grecian gown, white.*
Genius of Fine Arts,	*Grecian gown, light blue.*
Genius of Every Day Life,	*Grecian gown, pink.*

NOTE.

Scenery is not required for this entertainment. The stage or platform, draped and decorated as described below, should provide a small raised platform, with sliding curtains, at back for the tableaux. On one side of it may be placed bookshelves with books; on the other a table bearing scientific apparatus, or something of the sort. A stool down R. A stand with lamp, incense and magic crystal down L.

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The World's Work

SCENE.—MAGICIAN'S *apartments. Stage in black with gilt emblems representing light. Sun, moon, stars, lamps, torches, lightning, etc.*

(MAGICIAN *discovered seated on stool reading from antique looking folio.*)

MAGICIAN. "The secret of life." So plain it is that any may see it, and yet how many there be who search the four corners of the earth in vain for that which is all the time before their eyes. I have delved deep into the mysteries of ancient lore, of science, and of philosophy and every search has brought me back to the simple truth that any man may know. (*Knock.*) But hark! Some one would enter. Welcome! who ever thou art. (*Enter* YOUNG MAN, R. 2 E.) Peace be with thee and thine. What wouldst thou with me?

YOUNG MAN. Sir, I have heard that thou art possessed of wisdom far beyond other men, so I have come to thee for counsel. To me it seems that everything worth doing has already been done. The great problems of science have been solved. Art and literature are crowded with men of medium ability. Perhaps there may be now and then a genius, but they have no chance, for so well has the work of the past been done that none can equal it now. So it is with all professions. The World's work is being done so well, there are so many more workers than tasks, one man is so small a part of the world that it seems as if effort were hardly worth while. Venerable sir, I am in earnest. If thou canst show me aught worth doing I shall try to do it, and for thy pains and thine accumulated wisdom, I would give thee of my gold.) *Offers purse.*)

MAGICIAN (*pushes it aside*). Young man, thou art young,

very young,—and impatient. Put up thy gold. Truth may be wooed long in vain—but it is not to be bought with gold. I pardon thee thy ignorance else would I turn thee and thy gold from my door. Such as I have I give freely. Thou canst well see what has been done in the world, but because thou canst not see into the storehouse of the future thou thinkest it must be empty. Which is more beautiful and useful, the foundation of massive stone or the temple above it with its domes and spires, its buttresses and cornices, its altar and grand organ? Because thou canst not see the temple when the foundation is laid, wilt thou say that none can be built? Great has been the work of the past. In that thou seest aright, but only the foundations of the world's development have been laid. The grand superstructure is yet to come. Now we dwell in the cellar of this grand edifice and because the cellar is warm and dry we do not miss the beauty and comfort of the structure above. Could I show thee the plans of the Almighty Architect thou wouldst see how this earth shall become a worthy temple to the Most High and a fit dwelling-place for him whom he has created a little lower than the angels. I have discovered a secret by which I may bring into visible form the spirits that pervade the earth. From them thou mayest learn much that will guide thee on life's way. Remain thou very quiet and intent upon what is to be done, for the spell is a difficult one to perform. (*Lights incense lamp* L. *Goes to table up* L., *business with apparatus, lights alcohol lamp on table, business with crystal, etc.*) First thou mayest behold the Genius of Politics. (*Throws flash powder upon alcohol lamp. Repeats same business as each spirit is introduced. Enter* POLITICS R. 2 E., *not too soon.*) Hail! Mighty Spirit. This youth hath said that all the world's great deeds have been done. Canst show him aught to do in politics?

POLITICS (C.). Through me are the nations of the world governed. Long and bitter has been the struggle between the rights of man and the rights of Kings. The Republic has been evolved from this strife, and its keystone is equal rights. But even under a republic there are much corruption and injustice. Many political leaders are men of evil morals. Often our cities and states are ruled by an oligarchy of plunderers. Bribery and spoils are rife. Good laws are not enforced. Is there no opportunity here? Does not your nation need you? Honest, working politicians were never in greater demand, at the caucus, on the stump, at the polls and in the seats of au-

thority. Has the world reached the summit of good government? Honest men are wanted, wise men are wanted. New questions of policy are continually arising. If thou and such as thou will have naught to do with politics, who shall grapple with the problems presented by agitators and reformers, by socialism, monopoly, intemperance, anarchy, race antagonisms, foreign relations and commerce? Statesmen are noted because they are so rare, but government by the people will never approach the mark set for it until all the voters are statesmen, in honest intent at least, if not in wisdom. Lend a hand, Young Man, bear thy part, educate thyself in clean politics and with thy voice, pen, and influence help to educate thy fellow-voters. Show thyself honest and efficient and thou mayest be called upon for some public service of honor.

YOUNG MAN. Noble Spirit, I see as never before the duty and opportunity of an honest citizen.

MAGICIAN. And if thou wouldst see more, behold the Spirit of Invention.

(POLITICS *takes position at* L. *Enter* INVENTION, R. 2 E., *after business as before with flash powder, etc.*)

INVENTION. Young Man, by thy looks I see that thou doubtest my power. Because the world has been astonished at the Kathode Ray, Wireless Telegraphy, and the other great discoveries of yesterday, dost think that all my secrets are laid bare? Sixty miles an hour is the traveler's boast. That seems indeed fast when we remember the stage coach days of old, but what think ye of one hundred, one hundred and fifty, yea even two hundred miles an hour in safety and comfort? Food is abundant, thou thinkest, yet famine is rife, and at best the wheat must be sown, cared for and harvested, the grain sent to mill, the flour distributed, and the baker's art applied before thou canst eat. What thinkest thou of bread made directly by chemical process without waiting for the tardy action of sun and rain upon the soil? Fuel is plentiful for those who can buy, yet the forest trees are not as abundant as they were, coal mines are being exhausted, and even should they be exhaustless, vast labor must be expended ere man may use Nature's stores of combustibles. Why not gather the Sun's waste energy of summer and store it away to warm thy house in winter, or that thou mayest journey into lands of ice and snow in ease and comfort? Thou mayest even now converse across a

continent, why mayest thou not behold the countenance of thy friend a thousand leagues away? Man uses many of Nature's forces but everywhere is waste—waste—waste. A ton of coal must be used to furnish power which an hundredweight ought to give. If no new force or appliance should ever be found there would still be enough to keep inventors at work for centuries improving and perfecting those now in use. The telescope does great things but at a certain point it stops and baffles the astronomer who would look closer. Minute as are things the microscope shows us there are smaller still which we may not see. And that mysterious force electricity. What is it? (YOUNG MAN *shakes his head.*) Thou knowest not? Then find out and thou mayest increase many fold the uses to which it may be put. And chemistry—— (YOUNG MAN *puts out hand to stop him.*)

YOUNG MAN. Enough. Thou hast already shown me that the age of invention is yet in its childhood,—but these secrets, tell me of them. How may they be learned?

INVENTION. By work, Young Man—Science is a jealous mistress and one who would win her smiles must be her servant night and day. Thou canst not be an idler and a discoverer.

(INVENTION *goes to* R.)

MAGICIAN. Art convinced? or wouldst thou see more?

YOUNG MAN. I am convinced and yet I would see more.

(*Business with flash power as before.*)

MAGICIAN. Then behold the Genius of Charity.

Enter CHARITY.

CHARITY. Ancient wise man, why am I called hither?

MAGICIAN. To show this youth how the world needs the quickening of thy divine spirit.

CHARITY. Walk with me in imagination as in a gallery and behold the pictures there. They may not be alluring to thine eye but they are true and as thou movest along life's highways, thou mayest see them often. Behold. (*Tableau I.—Poor woman and child in rags in snowstorm. Tableaux exposed about one and a half minutes.*) "Distress" is the name of that picture. Hunger, cold and misery still dwell in the

world, still visit the homes of men, still punish innocent women and children. Brave men and women are trying to relieve them, but as yet they are striving to dam an ocean with handfuls of sand. As in this picture so is the life of thousands of thy fellow-creatures. Art thou doing anything for them? Behold another of life's pictures. (*Tableau II.—A man about to stab another.*) This is "Crime." The man about to kill his brother is a murderer. His nature is degenerate, his passions are base and yet he is thy human brother. Hast thou striven to assuage his unholy temper and tried to guide his feet into paths of industry and peace, or hast thou passed him by on the other side and said: "He is not like me and I will have naught to do with him"? Hast thou no duty towards thine erring brother as well as towards thy congenial friend? But another picture thou must see. Behold. (*Tableau III. —A drunken man.*) The name of this is "Vice."

YOUNG MAN. But, Noble Spirit, this man has sold his manhood for lustful pleasures, and by his own act has put himself where I may not go to help him.

CHARITY. Yea. So sayest thou, and so say many like thee. But, Young Man, heed this: that wretch, that sot, that bestial man, that outcast whom thou loathest, but for the grace of God might be none other than thee thyself. Sayest thou then, that thou art not thy brother's keeper? But we must hasten on and view yet another picture. Again behold. (*Tableau IV.—Man seated at table, head on his arms, as if in deep despondency.*) "Misfortune" we call this scene. This man has battled bravely against the ills of life but sorrow and disease have done their work upon him. Death has taken away his nearest kin. Sickness has kept him from his daily work and now poverty and discouragement are his companions. Thy veins are warm with rich young blood. Bethink thee how some of thy strength might straighten that bent frame, how some of that sympathy so easy to bestow, and which enriches the giver even more than him whom receives, how it might encourage this man under misfortune to a renewed faith in God and man,—how it might enable him to go into life's struggle on the morrow with courage born of the fact that some one has taken an interest in him. Many more pictures I might show but these must suffice. While such things are in the world never say that thou hast naught to do.

MAGICIAN. And thou wouldst know more, behold the Genius of Trade.

Enter TRADE.

TRADE. Brief and to the point am I. What wouldst thou with me?

YOUNG MAN. I would know what thou hast in store for the young man of these times. Shall not thy devotees be lost among those myriads who sacrifice their lives in a vain pursuit after that winged creature, wealth?

TRADE. Yes, perchance. If thou art a man with little industry and ambition, for without these qualities my devotees must surely fail. Economy, centralization, concentration, these are the main ideas of business now. Trusts and monopolies are the first efforts in that direction. The business ideal of the future is a co-operation which shall not destroy individual action, for without that the world of business must collapse. The world teems with business chances, but only the trained eye can see them, only the quick hand can grasp them. If thou wouldst get gold, do so, but use it too. The selfish rich man encumbers the earth, but he who from his honest gain gives to men happiness, learning, or relief, is as great as he who founds a state.

YOUNG MAN. Bold Spirit I thank thee, thou hast taught me much; and kindly sage wilt thou show me still more?

MAGICIAN. Behold the Genius of Fine Arts.

Enter FINE ARTS.

FINE ARTS. Thou hast said in thy mind, Young Man, that Shakespeare is dead, that Raphael is a memory of the past, that Beethoven's surpassing genius sleeps with him. Thinkest thou that Fine Art is only a Memory? Never was it more alive. All these masters have portrayed the spirit of other times. Who shall show forth the spirit of the times to come? Who shall put upon canvas or into words the deeds, the ambitions, the longings of the heroes of the Twentieth Century? Perchance among the rubbish that covers thine own best soul there may be the divine mark of genius, or if thou be no genius, perchance thou mayest have talents, which thou hast hidden in the napkin of idleness against the day of thy Master's return. Hast thou a poetical idea? Show it to the world even if thou canst not clothe it in the words of a Milton. Hast thou a melody within thee? Bring it forth in note even though it be not as the heaven born conceptions of Handel. Knowest thou a story of man's love or struggles,—let it see light, even though

thou be no Thackeray. To succeed in Fine Art means effort, patient unceasing and often disappointing. Thou canst not become a marksman in any of life's tournaments until thou hast taken many an aim in trial. Thou seest the workers and thinkest them too numerous, but the magnificent harvest before them is hidden from thy view. Never was there a louder call for master workmen, never so great a need for patient plodders. Fine Art offers thee fame, popularity and a competence, but only in exchange for thy soul's best effort. And the good thou mayest do! to cheer the despondent with soothing verse, to awaken to love and duty by delicious harmony of sound, to copy the transient beauties of Nature's moods and fix them on enduring canvas. Is not success in these things well worth the struggle that must be made to attain it?

(YOUNG MAN *appears to grow a little tired.*)

MAGICIAN. Gentle Youth, thou art growing weary and well thou mightest, but before thy departure I shall show thee one spirit more, one whose gentle modesty may make her sometimes seem of small account, the gentle spirit of Every Day Life.

Enter EVERY DAY LIFE.

EVERY DAY LIFE. Many great deeds can I do, but more still can I accomplish through a multitude of little things. I bring happiness and content to all who will follow me wisely. Think of that, Young Man. What better prize in life canst thou draw than happiness and content? Live each day with the supreme energy of thy nature. Spoil not thy happiness with petty faults. Bad temper will bring misery to thee and discomfort to thy friends. Fault-finding is easy because thy brethren are frail and mortal like thyself, but have thou none of it for it will ruin thy content. Sloth thrives upon idleness and will destroy thy power of mind and body. Cowardice will drag down thy heels when thou mightest make a brave leap for glory. Know thyself, trust thyself, work, be kindly, look not for great rewards and thou mayest be happy. Despise not little deeds for their total may be great. Look upon the world from an eye jaundiced by discontent and it seemeth a loathsome spot, teeming with misery, cruelty, and all things vile,—thy fellow-man a creature weak and full of evil passions, but look upon this thy terrestrial dwelling place with the eye of

Faith and Love and it shall be to thee a garden fair where thou mayest pluck delicious fruit, and thy brethren shall be children of thine own Heavenly Father. Kindness, love and sympathy shall well up for thee a perpetual spring. Thou shalt be better for living and the world shall be better that thou hast lived.

YOUNG MAN. Wise man, I thank thee and these kindly spirits; I am resolved to go into some work with energy. But with so much to do—whither shall I turn? I do not any longer question what can be done, but what shall I choose, how shall I be directed,—what shall be my guide?

MAGICIAN. I will show thee a guide. Behold. (*Tableau for a minute at the back of the stage; little girl in white holding a cross erect in one hand and an Easter lily in the other. During tableau.*) Follow thou that and forget thyself for thy fellow-men and thy success in life is assured. It may not be measured by dollars or by fame but it will be none the less real and lasting. (*Tableau Curtain.* YOUNG MAN *returns to his chair, sinks into it as if tired.* MAGICIAN *slips back of him and makes passes over his head during the rest of his speech as if to put him to sleep.*) And now, gentle youth, thou must be weary, thou hast conversed with celestial spirits, and such things exhaust weak mortals. So rest thyself—sleep! —sleep!—sleep!

(YOUNG MAN *sleeps. Spirits in turn take a step or two towards him, and each one after his short speech, while the next one is speaking, glides softly and slowly from the stage by nearest entrance. Towards the end lights are made a little more dim.*)

POLITICS. Rest. Be strong, fair youth, for all my battles must be fought by such as thou. [*Exit.*

INVENTION. Rest, Young America, and clear thy brain for the problems which I shall give thee to solve. [*Exit.*

CHARITY. May peace dwell with thee, and may thy soul overflow with love for thy fellows. [*Exit.*

TRADE. 'Tis such as thou must rescue me from tricksters and frauds. [*Exit.*

FINE ARTS. May thy sleep be filled with dreams of the beautiful and pure. [*Exit.*

EVERY DAY LIFE. Rest thy weary body and tired brain. Gain strength for thine every need on the morrow. [*Exit.*

MAGICIAN (*stage nearly dark*). Rest on. Thou hast been privileged beyond most of thy fellow-men. I hope that thou hast found the secret of life. May this not be in vain, but mayest thou live to be an honor to thyself, thy country, and the world. I'll leave thee to awake alone. Farewell. [*Exit.*

(*Stage darkened slowly; slow curtain.*)

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